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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001133

SIPDIS

AIDAC
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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR AF/SPG, PRM, AND ALSO PASS USAID/W
USAID FOR DCHA SUDAN TEAM, AF/EA, DCHA
NAIROBI FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA, USAID/REDSO, AND FAS
USMISSION UN ROME
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH
NAIROBI FOR SFO
NSC FOR JBRAUSE, TSHORTLEY
USUN FOR TMALY
BRUSSELS FOR PLERNER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAID PREF PGOV PHUM SOCI KAWC SU

SUBJECT: SUDAN - AVIAN FLU UPDATE #5

Summary

¶1. (SBU) On May 10, 2006, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) informed donors attending the weekly meeting on Avian influenza (AI) that the results received from the laboratories in Rome confirmed an outbreak of the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of avian influenza in Sudan. The Government of National Unity (GNU) has not yet officially informed the Sudanese public. Over 200 chicken farms have been decimated to date with the outbreak still continuing at a fast pace in the Khartoum area. Donors, UN, and several government representatives met on May 14 to form a technical task force to manage coordination, information dissemination, as well as provision of technical and financial inputs.
End Summary.

Outbreak update

¶2. (SBU) On May 10, 2006, FAO/Khartoum convened the AI weekly meeting of donors to brief on the AI situation in Sudan. Representatives of the Sudan Poultry Association also attended. FAO informed the donors that the reference laboratory in Italy confirmed on May 4 the presence of H5N1 strain of AI in Sudan. Despite these important test results, the government has yet to tell the public officially of the outbreak. According to the representatives from the Poultry Association, losses due to culling of birds and destruction of poultry products and poultry feed are now estimated at USD 8.5 million. Total economic losses are estimated at over USD 40 million. Some 30,000 workers are also out of work, as over 200 farms have been destroyed. The disease is still spreading in the farms around Khartoum, with high mortality among chickens and culling of chickens continuing. Four hundred farms around Khartoum remain unaffected. There are now also reports of the disease from northern Gizeira State. FAO and USAID AI experts are alarmed at the rapid spread of the virus, and deeply concerned that it is invading well set-up and protected facilities.

Response Operations

¶3. (SBU) The control measures taken are completely inadequate to contain the disease. There is no quarantine being imposed on infected farms, and workers culling the birds are doing so without the benefit of protective clothing. The limited protective clothing that is available is being reserved for government officials who are overseeing the operations. The issue of compensation has not been addressed by the government; this could encourage the owners of the farm not to report dead chickens and hence allow the virus to spread.

Coordination

¶4. (SBU) On May 14, FAO convened government representatives, USAID, the EC, and the World Bank, as well as UNICEF, WHO, and FAO to review and agree upon the terms of reference for an FAO-led task force that would provide technical oversight as well as coordination of donor inputs for the country-wide AI response. Neither the Ministry of Animal Resources (the ministry charged with coordinating the GNU's response and the entity most concerned at this point) nor the Ministry of Health, sent representatives (Comment: it was unclear whether this was due to an e-mail glitch or a sign of disinterest on the ministry's part. FAO is following up. End comment.) The Ministry of Science and Technology sent a representative, as did the Poultry Association. The next meeting of the task force will be on May 20, 2006, when

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the terms of reference will be finalized and circulated. USAID is a permanent member, as is the EC. In the meantime, the government's National Task Force has not met for the past month nor has the operational task force set up at the Ministry of Health.

Contributions

¶5. (SBU) USAID has deployed Dr. Gavin MacGregor-Skinner for three weeks to provide support to FAO in its work with the Ministry of Animal Resources and the Poultry Association. USAID also expects that 1,500 sets of personal protective equipment (PPE) will arrive by May 19 for the response operations in the North; an additional 500 will be delivered to Juba for preparedness purposes. Three hundred sets have already been delivered to Khartoum, of which 100 are to be sent to Juba. USAID has also committed USD 200,000 towards the FAO proposal submitted to USAID/W to assist in ramping up the management of the outbreak. No other donor has yet contributed to the AI response in Sudan.

¶6. (SBU) FAO has deployed an AI expert for one month. WHO has deployed NAMRU-3 to investigate the suspected human case, but has now returned to Cairo. UNICEF is leading work on a communications strategy that involves preparing posters, radio spots, and other information materials. All UN agencies are drawing from their own resources pending specific donor contributions.

Southern Sudan - Preparedness

¶7. (SBU) The task force agreed that the terms of reference would cover the needs of GOSS in addition to the GNU. As such, a representative of the GOSS should be

invited to participate in the task force and come to Khartoum for meetings. It was also agreed that although there would be a national strategy, due to the different nature of the poultry industry in the south (backyard poultry raising versus large-scale farming, which prevails in the north), the GOSS would have to have a response plan tailored to its needs.

HUME